

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6615

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 1048

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GB, KN, KS

SUBJ: GABON AND THE TWO KOREAS

1. SUMMARY. PRESIDENT BONGO RETURNEE FROM HIS 18-DAY EURASIAN VOYAGE JULY 10, AND DURING PRESS CONFERENCE AT AIRPORT STRONGLY ATTACKED NORTH KOREAN "INTERFERENCE IN GABONESE INTERNAL AFFAIRS." OBVIOUS NORTH KOREAN GAFFE CAN ONLY BENEFIT SOUTH KOREA AND "FRIENDLY" RESOLUTIONS IN UN. END SUMMARY.

2. ON HIS RETURN TO LIBREVILLE JULY 10, PRESIDENT BONGO HELD PRESS CONFERENCE AT AIRPORT. AFTER BRIEFLY DESCRIBING SUCCESSIVE STOPS OF HIS TRIP (DURING WHICH HE HAD ESPECIALLY NICE WORDS FOR HIS STAY IN SEOUL AND FUTURE OF GABONESE-SOUTH KOREAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION), PRESIDENT SAID HE WANTED TO EXPLAIN WHY HE HAD NOT GONE TO NORTH KOREA AS SCHEDULED. PRESIDENT SAID THAT IN BUCHAREST PRESIDENT CEAUSESCU HAD PASSED MESSAGE TO HIM FROM NORTH KOREANS THAT IF HE WANTED TO GO TO NORTH KOREA HE SHOULD CANCEL SOUTH KOREAN STOP. PRESSURE CONTINUED IN PEKING WHERE PRESIDENT AND SEVERAL DIFFERENT AMBASSADORS CALLED HIM UP IN THE MIDDLE OF NIGHT WITH SAME MESSAGE. PRESIDENT SAID HIS RESPONSE TO ALL THESE
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REPRESENTATIONS WAS SAME THING HE SAID UPON BECOMING

PRESIDENT IN 1967. QUOTE. GABON IS NOT FOR SALE, NOR CAN IT BE BOUGHT. END QUOTE. GABON READY TO BE FRIENDS WITH ANYONE WHICH IS WHY GABONESE HAD OPENED EMBASSY IN PYONGYANG, BUT GABON WILL NOT ALLOW ANYONE TO DICTATE WHAT GABONESE POLICY SHOULD BE. AND THIS WAS WHAT NORTH KOREANS WERE TRYING TO DO. IF THEY WANTED TO CONTINUE THIS WAY, BONGO WAS PREPARED TO CLOSE EMBASSY IN NORTH KOREA.

3. BONGO ALSO STATED THAT ONE OF MAIN PURPOSES OF TRIP WAS TO LOOK AT SITUATION FIRSTHAND IN BOTH NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND KOREAN PROBLEM AND DECIDE WHAT GABONESE POSITION SHOULD BE. NORTH KOREANS MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE. FURTHERMORE, NORTH KOREANS ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT SOUTHERN AGGRESSION AND AMERICAN IMPERIALISM WHEN NORTH KOREA STRONGLY BACKED BY CHINESE AND RUSSIANS. DID NORTH KOREANS THINK BONGO UNABLE TO SEE THIS? BONGO CLOSED BY SAYING THAT NORTH KOREANS STILL WANTED HIM TO VISIT, AND HE MIGHT, BUT IT WOULD NOT BE THIS YEAR OR THE NEXT.

4. COMMENT. IT OBVIOUS THAT NORTH KOREANS MADE MONUMENTAL GAFFE BY TRYING TO PRESSURE SOMEONE WHO WAS NOT WILLING TO BE PRESSURED. SOUTH KOREAN CHARGE WAS ECSTATIC OVER PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS. PRESIDENT'S EXPERIENCE CAN ONLY SOLIDIFY ALREADY FRIEDLY GABONESE ATTITUDE TOWARD SOUTH KOREAN POSITION IN UN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL BODIES.
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